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**THE**  
**Ginseng Culturist Guide**

*2nd EDITION REVISED.*

— — —  
**FROM SEED**  
**TO MARKET**  
— — —

**TWENTY YEARS'**  
**Practical Experience**

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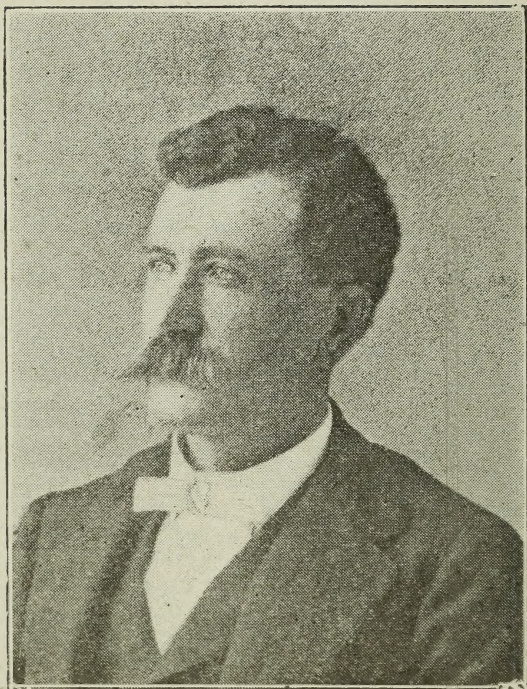
U. S. Department of Agriculture

BY

**J. W. SEARS**

**SOMERSET, KY.**





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THE AMERICAN GINSENG PLANT



PERTINENT POINTS ON

# AMERICAN GINSENG

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How I Became Interested in the Plant  
—Its History, Nature, Use and Value.

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A VALUABLE PLANT TO CULTIVATE.

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## American Ginseng Culture.

The American Ginseng is a common agricultural plant of great value, grown in many gardens in the United States and yielding large profits.

I have many inquiries about this wonderful money making plant; and as we learn its value we become interested in its cultivation. I have sold to parties just starting into the business \$500 to \$2,000 worth of Nursery stock. The largest order to any one party was for \$3,520.

**We have an unlimited** demand for the dry root at fair prices that pays well for the cultivation, and it should be the aim of every grower to grow large roots of good quality for the dry market. The dry root is worth \$6.50 to \$7.25 per pound in our markets.

**Unless a fair price** can be obtained for seed and young plants, it is more profitable to grow the roots to be of large size for the dry market, than to sell it for Nursery stock. Men of large capital have engaged in the business in many of the States, especially in Kentucky, Tennessee, Missouri, New York, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and some of the Western States.

**The expense of cultivation** is very small, but little land is needed, one acre in Ginseng will bring in as much money as a large farm cultivated to other crops, such as corn, wheat, oats, etc. The cultivation

is simple and easy when you once know the nature of the plant.

## How I Became Interested In The Plant.

Before I began the cultivation of Ginseng I had, for a few years, been buying and selling the dry root. The price was steadily advancing. I saw how eagerly it was hunted for by the expert "sang digger" and that the wild root was becoming scarce.

The rich north hillsides and valleys were being cleared up, where it mostly grew, and was cultivated in corn and other crops; saw mills and lumbermen working out the timber in many places, destroying its natural home. All this was proof to me that the value would increase. That the demand would be greater than the supply. Such is the case of all medicinal plants of value.

**There is no question** but that the plant can be as easily grown as garden plants, provided it is furnished with the right kind of soil and with shade.

### **Its History, Nature, Use and Value.**

**Ginseng**, no doubt, is the oldest medicine in the world. The Chinese use the root extensively; it is said to be their one medicine for all diseases. The American people are now using it largely as a medicine. Ginseng propagates itself by means of its seed only. The roots send up a new stalk each year. The berries are one to four seeded, of a bright red color when ripe. Each seed in the berry produces a separate root and stalk. Many roots are branched, having two or more roots. Some roots have two or three stalks, each stalk producing berries.



## Ginseng Exportation.

“The amount of ginseng which can be annually exported to China without overstocking the market is reported by United States Consul Johnson (who made a very exhaustive examination of the subject) to be over \$20,000,000 worth. Now, as the United States has never exported ginseng to the extent of \$1,000,000, although we have sent all that we could get our hands on, it will readily be seen that the field for an extensive and lucrative business is open to those who are sharp enough to avail themselves of the advice of those who are posted on this subject, and start into its cultivation.”—Western Farmers Almanac, Page 6, published by John P. Morton & Co., Louisville, Ky.

**But little land is required** to make immense profits. One crop of roots are worth \$420 to \$540 to the

square rod, grown in four to six years from the seed, besides the immense seed crops harvested during the time. By planting each year when you get started you have annual crops. In the Western states where forest trees do not grow, and where the wild Ginseng plant is unknown, it is grown with great success by irrigation and artificial shading.

**My book of instructions** is practical and the first of its kind ever published. The largest and best established Ginseng gardens in the United States were first started from seed and roots purchased of me, and grown under my instructions.

**The Ginseng Culturist Guide—from Seed to Market—General Instructions from Planting the Seed to Marketing the Root.**

**Natural Requirements.**

**It is of vital importance in growing**

Ginseng to know how nature grows it. This I will explain in a brief, plain, practical way in these instructions. Your Ginseng garden should be well drained, must have light and plenty of air.

### General Instructions.

**The plant naturally grows** in a well shaded, rich soil, where moisture is available. These requirements must be supplied. Soil, rich in vegetable matter, well supplied with moisture and shade, is acceptable to the successful growth of the plant—wet or swampy land will not do. Avoid planting where the land overflows in excessive wet weather. If low land is used at all it must be well drained. Most any land that will grow garden vegetables will grow Ginseng if well shaded.

### Artificial or Lattice Shading.

**To make a lattice shade** set posts

upright in the ground 10 feet apart each way, on their top or side near the top, nail a frame work of scantling or flat rails; have runners 4 feet apart one way, resting on pieces 10 feet apart. Brace well from post to runners, near top of post. On these runners nail slats or strips that are 5 inches wide, 10 feet in length,  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an inch thick. Leave  $1\frac{1}{4}$  inches space between slats.

**Sections may be made out of laths** 4 feet wide, length convenient, and fastened on the frame-work; in the winter where the snow fall is heavy they can be stored away in the dry, or have them made strong to withstand the weight.

**For convenience,** make frame work high enough to walk erect under it. This protects the plants from the direct rays of the sun, and allows a free circulation of air. On the sides of the beds exposed to the



sun it will be necessary to erect a verticle shade. For a cheap shade a lot of green brush may be put on in place of laths. Cedar makes the best brush for shade where it can be obtained.

**Ventilating** gates should be made about 50 feet apart on the sides to open on cloudy, murky damp days. A special wire door can be closed to keep out chickens etc. On the top shading it would be well to leave a few sections portable to be removed when ventilation is needed.

**In the spring** when the plants begin to come up and sap has started, if threatened with a cold snap or freeze, the ventilating gates may be closed. Each person in different localities and States should study the nature, conditions, and requirements of his garden and use such things as is best and most convenient.

**I think it best** to let the slats run north and south in making lattice shade, as the sun-light would constantly be changing on the plants. Space slats  $1\frac{1}{4}$  inches; give less space on ground sloping to the south, more on ground sloping to the north.

### Dodge Lattice.

**The ideal shade for Ginseng** is Dodge Lattice. Put up your frame work on plan given above. Lay the slats on frame work, leave one-half inch space between slats, nail tight every other slat, raise the other loose slats, and place a strip  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an inch thick and 2 inches wide on top of the slats that are nailed fast, have the strips 4 feet apart. Now nail tight the loose slats on strips directly over the space previously occupied. Slats must run north and south, strips between slats east and west.

**The amount of sun-light required**

may be regulated by giving more or less space between slats. You can make your frames in sections and store away in winter quarters to be placed on frame work again in the spring, if preferred.

**I planned out this** Dodge shade several years ago. If you will try it you will find your plants to be more healthy and vigorous. It is the best shade in use, except cedar brush shade which is good and can be made at less expense.

**The best point** in Dodge lattice is, it lets in less sunlight at mid-day and more in morning and afternoon, which gives a better circulation of air.

**For side shade** it is best to have the slats placed on posts horizontally, this, like the overhead shade will have the sun-rays continually changing on the plants all the time.

**Wire may be used** in making brush

shade if preferred, in place of slats. Run wire 16 inches apart over the frame work. Place brush on wire. For side shading use wire same as on top, 16 inches apart, weave or knit the brush in. You will find this to be a very satisfactory cheap shade.

## Openfield or Garden Culture— How to Prepare the Soil.

**In preparing the soil** the ground should be plowed or spaded deep, making it loose and porous; all loose rocks and roots removed from the soil, if any. Make the soil rich by working in humus (decayed vegetable matter) leaf loam, woods soil, etc. If manure is to be used, apply it in time to be well rotted before planting. The soil should be prepared one or two years before planting, and this may be done after one has fairly started.



## How To Make Compost Heaps.

**Compost heaps should be** made in the forest or near the garden, and let thoroughly rot into soil, for use in properly preparing the soil for planting roots and seeds.

**These heaps are made** by raking leaves, crumbled remains of logs and stumps, into piles where they will decay and be ready for use; weeds, brush, and decaying vegetable matter of all kinds may be well mixed with soil and added to the heaps. Leaves should be used freely in these heaps.

**A special heap** should be made of leaves only, and let rot to be used in planting seeds.

**All Vegetable matter** should be thoroughly rotted into soil before using, if not it will invite disease, insects and rot, to destroy the plants. The best fertilizer to grow the very best roots is soil from a well rotted

compost heap, or humus from a rich forest.

**Nothing must be worked** into the soil that will cause fermentation or heat, as it will destroy the plants. The beds would retain too much moisture and dampness, unnaturally. Late frosts and freezes would be more likely to injure the plants and cause disease. Most all disease in Ginseng is caused by the improper preparation of the soil, ventilation, etc.

**If from any cause** (except lack of sufficient shade) you should have plants to begin to decay or die, you should at once remove all the effected plants and spray with Bordeaux or Pyrox. This will prevent insects from scattering the disease or stinging the plants, and will cure and control blight, if the work is properly done.

### How to Make Beds.

**The beds should be made** 8 feet

wide, any length convenient. Leave an alley or walk-way between the beds 18 inches wide. Remove the soil from the alley with a spade or round pointed shovel, placing it on the beds, then make the top of beds level or rolling by using a rake. If beds are made higher in center it will give better drainage and more room for the plants. Lawn rakes should be used as they will not stick up with leaves like the common garden rake.

**Have the alleys** to run with slope of the ground to give drainage. Use tile drainage wherever needed.

## How To Plant Seeds.

**The berries may be planted** just as the are picked off the plant, if beds are ready, saves time and labor. The seeds must be kept fresh, not allowed to get dried out. It is necessary, sometimes, and espec-

ially for a beginner, to stratify the seeds, until beds are prepared and ready for planting. The surface of the beds must be of loose rich soil. Make a small trench or furrow across the bed, plant the berries or seed 1 to 2 inches apart in the rows, cover half inch deep, make the rows 6 inches apart. In covering the seed you make another furrow 6 inches from the one just planted for the next row; continue in this way until all are planted. You can take a sharp pointed hoe and make all the furrows in the bed first, then drop the seed. Take a rake and cover the seed lightly if preferred. Use soil from the compost heap made of leaves for seed beds and top dressing.

**After planting,** the beds must be covered with rotted leaves or mulched, as nature would cover them in their natural home among the forest trees. Scatter on some



loose, rich soil to hold mulch in place, where there is danger of the wind blowing it off.

**In planting, a board** may be used to stand on if preferred. When the young plants are up, all weeds must be pulled out so as to not injure the growth of the plants and that they may receive full benefit of the soil. Later on they cover the ground so completely that but little attention is required.

**Four to six years** are required to grow good marketable roots. October is the best time to dig roots for market, as they have ceased growing for the season and have their greatest weight.

**Young roots should be** reset or transplanted at the age of 1 to 3 years, and given more space to grow.

**On beds where you expect** seed to come up in the spring, you must have well rotted leaves, straw or

grass for mulch, so that the little tender plants can push through. They come up in a double like a bean. Keep the beds mulched both winter and summer.

## How To Stratify The Seeds.

**Take a box the size** desired, not quite tight in the bottom, put in a layer of sifted soil and sand (mostly of sand) one or two inches deep, then put in a layer of berries, continue in this way until box is full or all the berries are packed. Let the last layer of soil be 3 inches deep with a layer of moss or mulch of some kind on top. Then place a net of fine wire or perforated tin over the box to keep out mice. Keep moist but not wet. Put the box in a good dry cellar until ready to plant.

**If you want to water** test the seed before planting. This should be done when the pulp has had time

to be rotted off the seed. Put the seed, when sifted out, in a basin of water; take off all that will float, repack again in boxes and store in the cellar. When seeds are wanted they can be sifted out. Roots may be kept in this way, packed in sand and soil from fall season of the year, until planting time in the spring.

**This applies to Golden Seal, Pink Root, and other medicinal roots of value that we should cultivate.** Be sure to use plenty of good sifted soil and sand, the best obtainable.

## How To Plant Roots.

**The Roots are planted** in rows like the seed, giving more space for the larger roots, say 3 inches or more in the row, and the rows 7 to 9 inches apart. Care must be taken to have the bud at the top of the root covered about 2 inches deep with loose rich soil. Lay the roots down flat way along the fur-

row in planting. Finish up the beds by applying leaves and scattering on soil to hold in place against heavy winds if needed. Use a board to stand on while planting, as the bud might get broken or injured. The bud makes the next year's plant and seed crop.

## Managing The Crop.

**The Plants must be kept** free from weeds and grass; you can place one foot on the bed between the rows and weed one-half of bed at a time if they are wide beds. I prefer the wide beds, not so many alleys, get better growth on roots.

**In the Fall**, after the plants have died down, give the beds a good dressing of humus or leaf loam from your compost heap. Give the beds a mulching of leaves for protection during the winter and to retain moisture in summer. This should

be done each year until ready for market.

### Irrigation.

Where one is prepared to irrigate the beds or water the plants, will find it to be of great help. Ginseng can endure a drouth as well, if not better, than any other crop. This is a very important point to look after.

You who have gardens in the West where it is necessary to irrigate, may expect good results; some who have tried it report having a perfect success.

### Budding and Dividing Roots.

Wild Roots having long necks may be cut off near the main root in May and June. If healed away in loose soil and sand will bud again and send up a top next season.

Double Roots may be divided, the small root with bud planted again;



with 3 or 4 years growth will produce another crop of roots for the dry root market, and handsome seed crops. The large roots with no bud, cut off, may be dried for market.

## Forest Culture---Preparation of the Soil.

**Grub the undergrowth**, leave saplings and large timber to make sufficient shade. Care must be exercised in this case not to remove so many trees as to expose the plants too much to the sun. Dig the ground loose and deep, removing all loose rocks and tree roots. Tree roots should be cut away where they lie near the surface, but be sure not to cut any roots near the trees that will cause them to die. See that the beds have plenty of leaves to protect them during winter and summer. Scatter on loose rich soil to hold

in place, if needed, against wind storms.

**Beds made in the forest deep,** loose, and rich from the compost heap, are fine to sprout the seed, and grow 1 to 3 years; then transplant under artificial shading.

## How to Prepare the Roots for Market.

**Roots for Market.**—Dig the roots in the fall of the year, wash clean, lay in trays, let dry in sun, or in a room where there is a fire. The roots must not get too hot, but let dry slowly in warm air. Where large lots are to be dried a drying house should be used. Frame up a place in one end of the room four feet square or larger if needed, for the trays.

Nail strips one inch thick and two inches wide on each side of the frame six to eight inches apart for the trays. Have a door full width

of the frame on the front side. Make the trays proper size to slide in. The trays should be two inches deep with wire netting bottoms. When the roots are washed clean, put a layer on the trays and place in the frame.

Care must be taken not to let the trays come close enough to the stove to burn or scorch the roots. The fire in the stove should be kept at a moderate heat.

Pack roots when dry in boxes or barrels for shipment.

**The Stove may be placed in the center** of a large room; keep up a slow fire, especially in damp weather. The roots should be placed on trays in a frame or hung on strings next to the wall, and let dry perfectly. Usually it requires three to five weeks for drying. This gives the root the desired color, flavor and quality.

**I usually string** my roots for dry-

ing, hang on wires near the ceiling in a room where there is a fire. Work is over then until dried. I have the wires 8 inches apart overhead, have little wires bent in shape of the letter S. Hook this in end of string. I have a pole with a bent wire that will fish them up to the wire and hang on. We also take the roots down with this invention when dry.

### Best Dry Root Market.

**When you have** any dry roots to sell I will be pleased to give you any information I can. With the experience that I have I believe that I can get you the safest and best market price for your roots, and charge you only a very small per cent commission for my work. I get the best prices obtainable. When you have any roots to offer I will be pleased to hear from you. I keep posted as to market conditions and prices. Roots held until

price offered is approved by the owner. You can know the price the roots are to bring before they are sold. This makes all transactions perfectly satisfactory.

### The Enemies of Ginseng.

**I use a spring mole trap** for catching the mole—it will get him coming and going, and you do not have to wait to see it done.

**I use the spring dead-fall-trap** for the short-tailed mouse. Let the trap down level with the top of the ground. Winter is the best time to trap for them.

**Woods mice** may be trapped in the same way, if they eat on your Ginseng seed. Place a board over the trap while set to protect it from the rain or anything that might fall on it. Have board above reach of spring.

**When you once** know the nature of the plant the cultivation will be



easy and simple, and you will soon learn to grow roots to weigh one-half pound in five or six years from the seeds.

### Spraying Ginseng.

**Blight can be overcome** by spraying with Bordeaux. I use 5 pounds of blue stone to 25 gallons of water, and 5 pounds of fresh live lime to 25 gallons of water. Pour the two solutions together at the same time. This makes Bordeaux. I put a tablespoonful of paris green to 10 gallons of Bordeaux. It cures the blight if made right and properly applied. I put my blue stone in a barrel of water to dissolve before ready to use. Place near top or water so it will mix well.

**We had plants** to start with blight and checked it and harvested the seed on some that had shed part of the foliage. For early spraying do not have the Bordeaux full strength.

**Will try Pyrox** next year—it is highly recommended by those who have used it.

### **Dwarf Ginseng.**

**There is a plant** very much like the true American Ginseng, known as Dwarf Ginseng. The plant does not mature any seed. Is sometimes called Southern Ginseng, as it is found growing wild in some of the extreme Southern States, also in some of the Eastern States bordering on the coast.

**When I was in New York State** a few years ago, I found some of this dwarf ginseng growing in a garden. I was told that it came from Pennsylvania or North Carolina. I brought with me a sample of the roots and plants and submitted them to an eminent Botanist at Lexington, Kentucky, Hon. H. Gorman, who said that it was not a true, perfect Ginseng plant, but

that it was a "male" (staminate) plant, known as Dwarf Ginseng, which has only the stamen, without the pistil, and is consequently worthless, being barren.

**The true American Ginseng** (*Panax Quinquefolium*) is a perfect plant bear both stamens and pistils, grows well in all climates in the United States and Canada, both North and South, East and West.

**Of course the changing** of climatic conditions will disarrange the growth of the plant temporarily, but just as soon as the plant gets accustomed to its new surroudings it will partake of the characteristics of that section, and if it does not grow well it means inattention on the part of the cultivator, or from the fact the conditions are not right.

**I have a number** of letters from parties living in the Northern States and Canada, who purchased

stock from me to plant, several years ago, stating their plants make good growth, and produce large crops of well matured seed.

**The Leaf of Dwarf Ginseng** is a glossy green, thick; the root is short and small, and produces no seed. The seed bud does not come up with the top growth, as in the case with our *Panax*, but forms generally late in July, and bearing stamens alone; matures no berries.

**In our Nursery** we have only the true *Panax American Ginseng*. All our medicinal plants are true to name:

**Ginseng** (*Panax Quinquefolium*);

**Golden Seal** (*Hydrastis Canadensis*);

**Pink Root** (*Spigelia Marilandica*);

**Seneca Snakeroot** (*Polygala Senega*);

**Virginia Snakeroot** (*Aristolochia Serpentaria*);

**Lady's Slipper** (*Cypripedium Hirsutum*);

**Bloodroot** (*Sanquinaria Canadensis*);

**Wild Ginger** (*Asarum Canadensis*).

We are just beginning to plant some of the other minor medicinal plants, such as Senega, Red and Yellow Lady's Slipper, etc.

### Golden Seal Root.

**Golden Seal is a hardy plant**, healthy and strong, will grow where ginseng grows but does not require the shade that the ginseng plant needs. It is best however to have some shade. The golden seal plant is somewhat like the ginseng plant in its nature and growth. Yet it is very different in its propagation, ginseng increases and spreads from the seed only, while the golden seal increases and spreads from both the seed and root. Golden seal roots should be planted one to two feet apart in the beds, and in a few years the whole bed will be one solid mass of roots that run out



from the main root, forms buds and sends forth new tops and make new roots, they in turn do the same thing, this process is kept up until the beds become one solid carpet-like covering of plants.

**The Soil** should be very rich and loose, it wants to have as natural conditions to grow in as possible. Commercial fertilizers and manures should never be used in preparing beds for golden seal or ginseng; humus, woodsoil, rotted leaves, etc., is best, as it will allow the plant to retain its wild properties.

## Pink Root.

**Pink is a beautiful** medicinal plant, grows very much like the Golden Seal and Ginseng. It is a valuable plant to grow, has red bell flowers at the top of the plant, will beautify your Ginseng garden.

It requires but little labor for its cultivation.

It is scarce and the price stead-

ily advancing. Begin to grow it now; no doubt in a few years when



PINK ROOT

you have a crop to harvest, prices will be high like Golden Seal.

It grows in most all kinds of

soil, requires but little shade, a rapid grower, and interesting to cultivate.

## **Golden Seal and Pink Root.**

**Seal and Pink** are grown very much like the Ginseng, and will come under practically the same cultural directions.

**They do not require** as much shade as Ginseng. It is not necessary to prepare the soil as deep, but have it good and rich.

**So far Pink Root and Seal** are free from such pests as moles, mice, insects and all kinds of diseases.

**In a few years** we may see Pink jump up like Golden Seal. Now is the time to begin to prepare and be ready for the high prices.

## **The Cultivation of Golden Seal.**

**For the successful** growth of the Golden Seal plant, soil conditions should closely imitate those pre-

pared for Ginseng, and should have plenty of humus from the the compost heap, well worked into the soil, making it light and porous, naturally retaining forest soil conditions and securing moisture.

Great care should be taken in making the best possible compost heaps. Much depends upon this in Seal culture; same with all medicinal plants.

Seeds may be planted while fresh in a well prepared bed, or stratified in sifted sand and leaf mold mixed, placed in cellar until time to plant in the spring. Use a screen for sifting sand and leaf mould that will not allow the seed to pass through.

**When roots have 3 to 4 years growth** they should be taken up, and divided; all that have a bud may be reset, giving more space.

Small running rootlets or cuttings may be planted. Many will

form new buds and produce fine roots.

Golden Seal is free from all kinds of diseases, insects, etc. Moles and mice seem to abhor its bitter taste and make their burrows and runs in other quarters. If the top gets broken off in the spring, the root will send up another. Ginseng will not do that, but Pink Root and Seal will make a new top as late as June or July.

**Pink Root wants practically** the same cultivation and attention as that of the Golden Seal. Pink spreads from the root, but not like Golden Seal. It does not have the long running rootlets like Seal, but root added to root, in clusters, all making one or more tops. Seeds should have the same care as Golden Seal seed. Pink Root is a good seed-bearing plant.

**Little did I think**, twenty years ago,



when I first began the cultivation of ginseng, that it would be such a profitable enterprise that there would be so many growers as there are to-day, or that the price would advance so rapidly. No one had ever tried to grow the plant here before. I had all to learn, there was no one to tell me how to grow it. Neither did I have a book of instructions to help me out.

I had been dealing in dry ginseng for quite a while, saw the price advancing, the scarcity of it, etc., and I believed that it could be cultivated successfully. The outcome to-day is, that there are hundreds of Ginseng growers in the United States, who are making it a profitable business.

### Conclusion.

Carefully follow the Instructions given here, and you can't help but

succeed. It will all become natural to you as you advance in the business. Plant every root and seed that you can get; there is money in it. If in these instructions you find any points not plain to you, I will be pleased to help you.

If further information is desired a stamp should be enclosed for a reply.

**Prices for Seeds and Roots** will be given on application. This book will be mailed on receipt of price, \$1.00.

We will be pleased to have anyone interested in the cultivation of Ginseng or any of the medicinal plants to visit our gardens, located five miles east of Somerset.

Telephone No. 226.

**I will be pleased** to correspond with all parties interested in the cultivation of medicinal plants, and can furnish many of these roots in their season.

Red Lady Slipper is a beauty, but few plants can be found in this country, growing wild.

The Kentucky Ginseng Nursery will make a special effort to stock up on these rare medicinal plants in the near future, those having the most value.

**Will buy plants,** sell plants, exchange plants, in anyway to help push the business to success for the growers, that will be of mutual benefit.

**In this Book** of Instructions that has cost me years of hard study, work and great outlay of money you get my practical experience compiled together up to date, for the small sum of \$1.00.

Do you grow Ginseng? Have you ever tried it? What has been your success? Write me especially on this line. Try some Golden Seal and Pink Root. All are sure crops under proper cultivation.

## Directions and Instructions.

If you have anything to sell, or want to buy, let me hear from you—write me a special, personal letter.

State the amount of roots and kind wanted.

Prices will be given on application.

Orders for Fall planting must be in by September 1st; Spring planting by March 1st. Orders may be made at any time by sending 20 per cent of the amount ordered, balance when ready to ship.

Orders must be made on receipt of prices.

Cash must accompany all orders.

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